

REVIEWS

Miguel de Cervantes. *The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha*.
Trans. John Rutherford. Intro. by Roberto González Echeverría.
New York: Penguin, 2001. xl + 1023 pp. ISBN: 0-1404-4804-7
(paperback).

Penguin Books published its first translation of *Don Quixote* in 1950, done by J[ohn] M[ichael] Cohen. It was reprinted about eight times until 1975 and then went out of print. It was a good work. I couldn't figure out why it was dropped from Penguin's list—unless because it was supplanted by Walter Starkie's 1964 complete translation published by Signet Classics in the United States.

In any case, it's good to see that Penguin is back with this new translation. Rutherford did his translation in the town of Ribadeo in Galicia. He used Murillo's text, and María Moliner's *Diccionario de uso del español* (Madrid: Gredos, 1966–67; CD 1996; second edition 1998). He also had at hand three English translations for reference (but doesn't say which ones).

The introduction states that characters will speak using contemporary English, just as Cervantes had his characters speak using the contemporary Spanish of the day (xxix). Thus, Ricote says: "Come off it, Sancho..., islands are in the middle of the sea" and later on the same page: "Shut up, Sancho, and come to your senses" (II, 54; 856). Where don Quijote asks to see the religious figures in II, 48, one of the men says: "Just wait a jiff and you'll see with your own two eyes" (874). The introduction also says that the *vuestra merced, vos, tú* forms of address will all be resolved as "you." I'm sorry to see *your grace* eliminated since it adds a flavor of the times, at least for me. The introduction also states that the *robo del rucio* is going to be put "where it belongs," following Hartzbusch's edition, in Part I, Chapter 25, instead of Chapter 23. I am of the opinion it doesn't belong anywhere at all in the book, but placing it in Chapter 25 makes some sense.

I like it that certain Spanish items are translated or explained for English-speaking readers, seemingly as part of the work: "His surname's said to have been Quixada, or Quesada (as if he were a jawbone, or a cheese-cake)" (25), and "he finally decided to call it *Rocinante*, that is *Hackafore*"

(28)—but don't try to find "hackafore" in any dictionary—and: "he decided to call himself *Don Quixote*, that is, *Sir Thighpiece*" (28). Later it says: "He was nicknamed Machuca, that is to say, thrasher" (75). In order to handle the Panza/Zancas problem, it expands a bit (shown in italics at the end): "at his feet were the words *Sancho Zancas*, and he must, to judge from the picture, have had a short body, a plump paunch and long shanks, *these last two features being expressed in the words Panza and Zancas respectively*" (76). Rather than mention *el Alcaná* of Toledo and footnote it, the translation says instead: "the main shopping street in Toledo" (74). A pretty good solution. When Sancho describes his trip on Clavileño (II, 41; 763), he says: "We were going along by the Seven Sisters, that we also call the Seven Little Goats." Adding the initial information about the Seven Sisters is a good idea, since English speakers would have no idea what the Seven Little Goats referred to.

I was also glad to see that most Spanish names were kept Spanish: Grisóstomo, Luscinda, Juan Pérez de Viedma. On the other hand, some names have been altered via translation, and I wonder if that's a good idea. In the poems written by the Academicians of Argamasilla, Monicongo is called Sambo, Paniaguado is called Flunkey, and Tiquitoc is called Ding-Dong (why not Tick-Tock?). Also, while Paniaguado's sonnet is titled "*In laudem Dulciniae del Doboso*" in the original, the translation, following Murillo's text in Spanish, "corrects" it to Toboso. Man, is it ever hard for Cervantes' jokes to survive! In Part II, Chapter 10, "[buscar] a Marica in Ravena" was translated: "looking for a girl called Maria in Madrid" (545). Why was that done? Finally, at the end of II, 24; 653, when we see the mysterious cousin for the last time, in the original it calls him "sobrino" instead of "primo," another obvious contradiction put in on purpose by Cervantes. The translation makes it into "cousin," since in Murillo's text it is hypercorrected back to "primo."

The translation has a decidedly British slant. The language is very colloquial—the more colloquial the language is, the more region-specific it is. There is nothing the matter with this in principle, let me emphasize, but I wonder how an audience of American students will react to the text, or understand it properly, for that matter.

Here are some examples of Britishisms that may prove difficult or impossible for young American readers. When the narrator says that Sancho was astonished to see all the galley rowers stripped to the waist, the text goes on with: "But this was small beer compared to what I shall narrate next" (II, 63; 918). The Spanish says: "Pero esto todo fueron tortas y pan pintado, para lo que ahora diré." I didn't know what *small beer* means. The *OED* rescued me with this definition: "Trivial occupations, affairs, etc.;

matters or persons of little or no consequence or importance; trifles.” In the village where Sancho makes a ruling about the race between the fat man and the thin man, the race is explained this way: “One of the villagers is so fat he weighs twenty stone, and has challenged another man, a neighbor of his, who weighs only nine stone to a race” (II, 66; 936). A *stone* is fourteen pounds and is the way Britishers tell the weight of people—so many stone and so many pounds. Americans might wonder why, in Part I, Chapter 30, Micomicona says she was looking for “Don Biscuit, or Don Fixit, or Don Riskit” (273) since those words bear little resemblance to the way Americans say “Quijote.” But in British English, Quixote is pronounced “Kwikset.” The niece says to Sancho in II, 2: “I hope you choke on your bloody islands” (498). Sancho says to his wife that she must “cosset the dun these next three days” (II, 2; 525). The original Spanish version reads: “os conviene tener cuenta estos tres dias con el rucio.” Webster’s says that *cosset* means “to treat as a pet.” When the Squire of the Woods is described, his nose is said to be the color of an “aubergine” (II, 14; 574), a vegetable which Americans know as eggplant. In II, 23, when Sancho is talking about don Quijote’s visit to the Cave of Montesinos, he says: “That character Merlin...stuffed your memory full of all that codswallop” (644). In II, 31, when Sancho argues with doña Rodríguez, the duchess explains that her lady-in-waiting is “wearing those weeds more from custom and authority than because of her years” (694). *Weeds* means ‘mourning clothes’ according to *OED*, listed under “dole, dool, dule, *n.*” When the German pilgrims ask Sancho for alms, in Spanish it says that Sancho “no tenía ostugo de moneda,” but the translation says: “he didn’t have a farthing on him” (II, 54; 851). The *farthing* is certainly old enough to be used in 1615, but I don’t like an English coin being used in 1615 Spain. Certainly “he had no coins on him” reflects the Spanish well, and doesn’t give Sancho any foreign money. When Sancho falls into the pit with his donkey he is brought up with “ropes and aye with cables” (II, 55; 862). *Aye* means ‘even,’ thanks again to the *OED*. British readers may not think anything of this linguistic treatment, but in America I believe readers would think that *Don Quijote* takes place in England rather than Spain.

Sancho Panza speaks as a Cockney might (in a British radio adaptation of the novel, Bob Hoskins also did a Cockneyized Sancho). Sancho, even though he was an illiterate fellow, really spoke a rather standard Spanish, and not a substandard variant, and Cockney English is substandard. When did Sancho make any grammatical *faux pas*? His problems, it seems to me, were purely lexical. In any case, in this translation, Sancho says things like: “I’ll be blowed, gents, if the author of that book you’ve got there doesn’t want to get on bad terms with me” (II, 59; 889). “My master’s a dab hand at matchmaking—not too many days ago he forced this bloke to marry this

maiden after he had refused to keep his promise" (II, 60; 896). When Sancho learns that he will govern once again in his own house if he goes home, he says: "The great prophet Stan Streason couldn't have done it any better" (II, 62; 913). I can find no reference to Stan Streason anywhere, even in *OED*, but at least in the Spanish original, Perogrullo can be annotated as the personification of a person who says things that are obvious. Sancho says in Part I, Chapter 25 that they lost their "lint" (213) when the donkey was stolen. I seem to recall that *lint* refers to bandages in Britain. *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* doesn't list it as that. Sancho frequently uses the "this here, that there" substandard construction. Here is an example: "Now you really are a faithful and loyal squire...as this here banquet shows" (II, 13; 567). Similarly, Sancho uses the echoed subject-verb reflection of the previous phrase with some frequency, as in the *they were* in the following example: "Oh yes, they were just the sort to put up with being mucked about with like that, they were" (703–04)—this is what Sancho says when the authenticity of Amadís is questioned. The Spanish says: "Bonitos eran ellos para sufrir semejantes cosquillas." That repetitive tag is seen a few pages later (and in many other places) when Sancho says that Sansón "has been bachelored at Salamanca, he has" (718). I think it is a mistake to make Sancho into something other than a Spaniard.

A few minor items within the translation. When don Quijote asks Sancho "what jewel did [Dulcinea] give you when you bade her farewell" (I, 31; 282), I think what is meant is "reward" and not "jewel," since one of the meanings of *joya* is 'reward.' When the canon of Toledo in Part I, Chapter 48, says that he has tried his hand at writing a book of chivalry, the text says: "I've written more than a hundred pages of it" (442). The Spanish says "cien hojas"—a hundred *folios*, or *two hundred* pages. As don Diego approaches and passes don Quijote, his mare suddenly becomes a mule (II, 16; 583), as if it were a Cervantine contradiction, but in the original *yegua* is used both times. In that same chapter "Don Quixote asked him how many sons he had" and later stated: "Sons, sir, are fragments of their parents' bowels" (587). *Hijos* should translate, I believe, as 'children.' At the beginning of the Adventure of the Lions, when don Quijote puts on his helmet filled with curds, the Spanish says: "Don Quijote quitó la celada para ver lo que...le enfriaba la cabeza," but the translation says: "Don Quixote...removed his helmet to see what it was that had given him a cold head, if not cold feet" (591). I don't see why "cold feet" needs to be put in. It seems to me that when the duke says that hunting isn't a sport "for every Tom, Dick and Harry" (II, 34; 722), there is too much variance from the Spanish flavor of the text (the original simply says: "no es para todos"). In II, 43; 774 a good joke was missed when the translation has Sancho say (the italics are mine):

"I've just thought of *a few more* [proverbs] that would have fitted in here like pears in a basket." The original says that Sancho has *four* such proverbs, then he goes on to state only three! It is baffling why, when the Spanish text says that Sancho's island had "hasta mil vecinos," that the translation would read "a town of about five thousand inhabitants" (II, 45; 785). Later, when don Quijote asked for a lute to be put in his room (II, 46; 792–93) and was given another instrument instead, the Spanish text says it was a *vihuela*, but the translation says it was a guitar. That's an economical way of solving the problem, but they were two different instruments (the *vihuela* had six sets of double strings, among other differences). In the next chapter, when the doctor quotes Latin to Sancho, he uses a wrong form—*perdicis* instead of *perdices*. The Murillo text "corrects" the form to *perdices*, from which the translation was made, but the wrong form shows that the pedantic doctor isn't as knowledgeable as he thinks (797). Now, here is something that I cannot understand: Sancho's island doctor is named Pedro Recio de Tirtea-fuera in the original, but in the translation, the town changes from Tirtea-fuera to Vamos (798). The neighboring towns, Caracuel and Almodóvar del Campo, are left as they were in the Spanish. I once looked at a map to check out the accuracy of the geography; imagine what happens when you look to see where Vamos is.

The Galician/Yanguesan problem is one that many editors and translators cannot stand to leave alone. Here, too, the Galicians mentioned in the body of the text are hypercorrected to Yanguesans (115), the way it usually is handled. This is, of course, one of the obvious Cervantine contradictions built into the work, and it cheats the reader not to leave it as is. Another contradiction is the one about Vicente de la Rosa/Roca in I, 51, where the fellow is called Rosa twice and then Roca once. Editors and translators usually opt for one or the other. This translation follows Murillo's edition and elects Rosa (463–65). I think this is another intentional Cervantine contradiction and should be respected.

Some notes seem a bit off the mark. When don Antonio says to Sancho, in Chapter 62 of Part II, that he's heard he is fond of *manjar blanco* and keeps meatballs overnight in his shirt, the note gives a fine description of *manjar blanco*, but fails to mention that it was *Avellaneda's* Sancho who was so fond of *manjar blanco* and stored meatballs that way. Garcilaso's lines starting with "Oh, dulces prendas por mi mal halladas," when don Quijote sees the Tobosan wine jars, is accompanied by a note which says only: "The first lines of Garcilaso de la Vega's much-quoted Sonnet X" (1009). I believe the note should go on to say what the "dulces prendas" were (a lock of hair from Garcilaso's deceased beloved). The comparison between Tobosan wine-jars and the beloved's lock is so ludicrous—if it is known what the

reference is—that it should make readers laugh.

In sum, having stated what the objectives of the translation are—to put *Don Quijote* into contemporary English—John Rutherford has done a good and careful job. As to whether it can be used effectively in American “*Don Quijote* in Translation” courses, maybe I’m too much of a worrier. Why not give it a try?

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